

# How to Chair a Meeting

Paul Newton



PAUL NEWTON

---

# HOW TO CHAIR A MEETING

How to Chair a Meeting

1<sup>st</sup> edition

© 2018 Paul Newton & [bookboon.com](http://bookboon.com)

ISBN 978-87-403-2483-9

# CONTENTS

	<b>Preface</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>What Makes a Good Chair?</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1	Active Listening	12
1.2	Assertiveness and Diplomacy	13
1.3	Impartiality	15
1.4	Adaptability	15
<b>2</b>	<b>Meeting Rules</b>	<b>16</b>

www.sylvania.com

**We do not reinvent the wheel we reinvent light.**

Fascinating lighting offers an infinite spectrum of possibilities: Innovative technologies and new markets provide both opportunities and challenges. An environment in which your expertise is in high demand. Enjoy the supportive working atmosphere within our global group and benefit from international career paths. Implement sustainable ideas in close cooperation with other specialists and contribute to influencing our future. Come and join us in reinventing light every day.

Light is OSRAM

**OSRAM SYLVANIA**



<b>3</b>	<b>The Duties of the Chair</b>	<b>20</b>
3.1	Before the Meeting	20
3.2	At the Start of the Meeting	23
3.3	During the Meeting	25
3.4	After the Meeting	28
<b>4</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>31</b>

# PREFACE

Even the most contentious issues can be dealt with constructively and resolved to everyone's satisfaction if the chair controls the meeting well. On the other hand, a badly run meeting leaves all of the attendees feeling frustrated that they have wasted their valuable time. This eBook explains how to chair each stage of the meeting to ensure that your meetings are both productive and popular.

You will learn:

- To develop an agenda that ensures the meeting achieves its goals.
- What pre-emptive actions you can take before the meeting to avoid common problems.
- How to keep the meeting focused and encourage full participation.
- How to discreetly prevent others from taking control or holding up progress.
- Why you must always review and evaluate the meeting results against the objectives.

# INTRODUCTION

If a meeting is going to achieve its objectives efficiently then it is essential that someone takes the role of defining the topics to be covered, facilitating the discussions, and ensuring that decisions are reached and accepted.

This role is known as the meeting Chair and carries with it the ultimate responsibility for the success of the meeting.

All meetings require a Chair because without one there is no one to control and direct the proceedings. The Chair must establish their authority from the outset of the meeting and remain in control until the meeting ends.



The most important responsibilities of the Chair are to ensure that:

- All the business is discussed in line with the timed agenda
- Everyone's views are heard and discussed
- Clear decisions are reached and accepted

## **All the business is discussed in line with the timed agenda**

The agenda is a very important tool and is one clear way for the Chair to set expectations of what topics will be covered by the meeting. Each item on the agenda should have a set amount of time allocated to it, as this informs attendees of the relative importance and complexity of each item. The agenda is one of the key tools by which the Chair leads the meeting and ensures that all those involved can make useful contributions. It also discourages digressions and arguments from taking up too much time.

## **Everyone's views are heard and discussed**

As Chair one of your key responsibilities is to ensure that the meeting is conducted in a manner that is as inclusive as possible. Your behavior and manner will set the tone of the meeting and you are the key instrument in managing this process.

Not everyone will be familiar with formal meeting procedure and people who are not comfortable with what is going on around them are less likely to take the risk of speaking up. This can result in some attendees becoming so alienated and intimidated that they are unable to contribute to the meeting.

In your position as Chair you need to be mindful of such behaviors and draw people into the discussion by reducing the barriers to participation by creating an environment that allows for the expression of diverse ideas and approaches to be heard in a non-judgmental atmosphere.

Within this environment attendees should feel confident that their contributions are valued and can be articulated without fear of personal attacks or point scoring. By making sure that all of the attendees contribute and are given a respectful hearing, the Chair will maximize the opportunities offered by the meeting to make the best decisions possible.

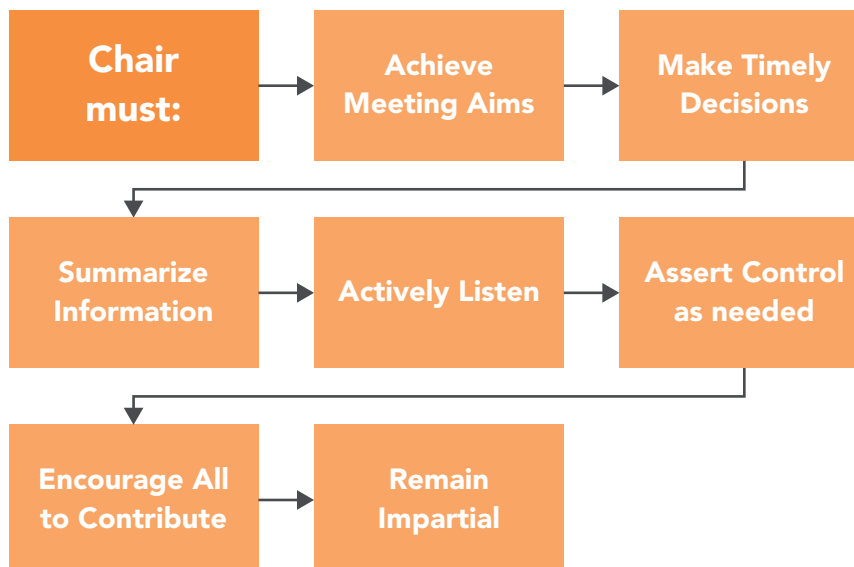
### **Clear decisions are reached and accepted**

One key role you perform as Chair is to present information and summaries clearly so that decisions can be agreed on and a consensus achieved. You will need to do this as arguments are presented and an overview of them needs to be stated to ensure the discussion reaches a timely conclusion.

You need to ensure that the meeting's objectives are achieved so that everyone leaves the meeting cognizant of the decisions made and responsibilities allocated.

During the meeting, as Chair you must focus on the decisions required of the meeting, ensure that all participants are accorded adequate time, decide when to end debate on each topic and summarize it, use appropriate questions to clarify information or re-direct discussion, listen carefully to all contributions, and summarize proceedings with an emphasis on decisions taken and future plans.

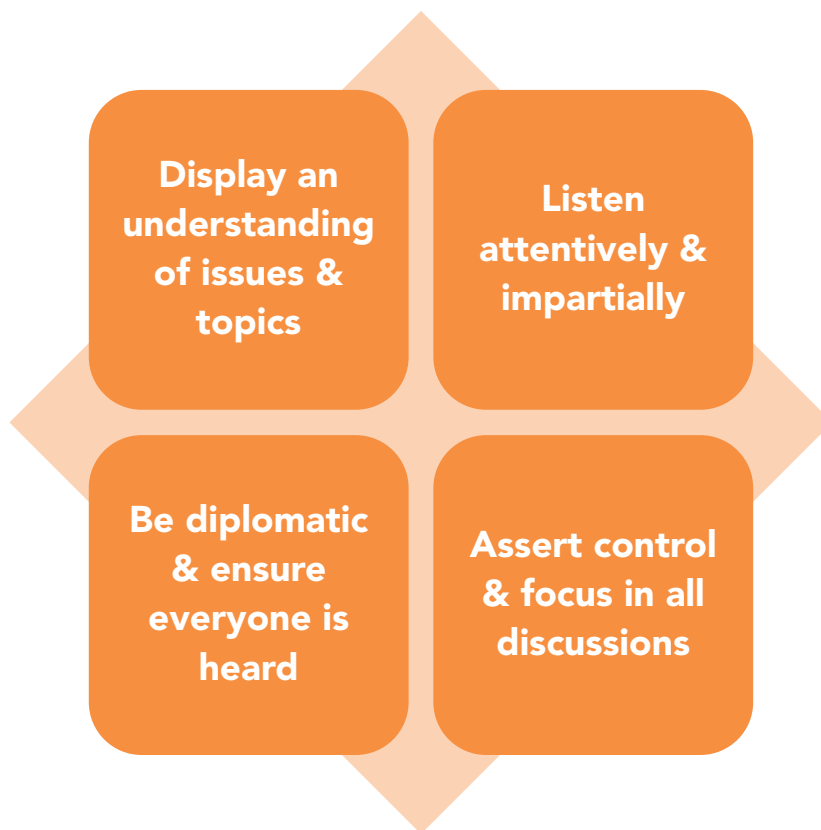




Throughout the meeting there are certain competencies a Chair will need to illustrate so that he or she commands the respect and authority necessary to perform his or her role effectively during the time span of the meeting:

- An understanding of the issues and topics being discussed.
- A willingness to listen attentively to the discussions.
- The ability to prevent discussions wandering and to prevent those without anything new to add repeating the same point.
- The ability to recognize when a point has been fully discussed and to sum up.
- Impartiality, which ensures that all attendees have an equal opportunity to express their point of view.
- Diplomacy, which shows respect for the views and actions of others.

The above are all key ingredients for a productive meeting. A tactful but assertive Chair will facilitate an effective meeting, and that's what everyone wants.



The selection of a Chair for a formal meeting may be subject to certain rules. For example, the company secretary may be required to chair the AGM. Informal meetings may select a Chair by a simple vote or via instructions from whoever has called the meeting.

Sometimes there is a rotating Chair where everyone gets a turn at leading the proceedings. Whilst this idea is democratic and inclusive, it is unlikely that the skills and qualities required of an effective Chair will be found in all of those attending the meeting.

Everyone can learn how to chair a meeting effectively, it just takes a bit of thought and practice. You will get more confident with experience. Try watching how other people chair meetings, and seeing what works and what doesn't.

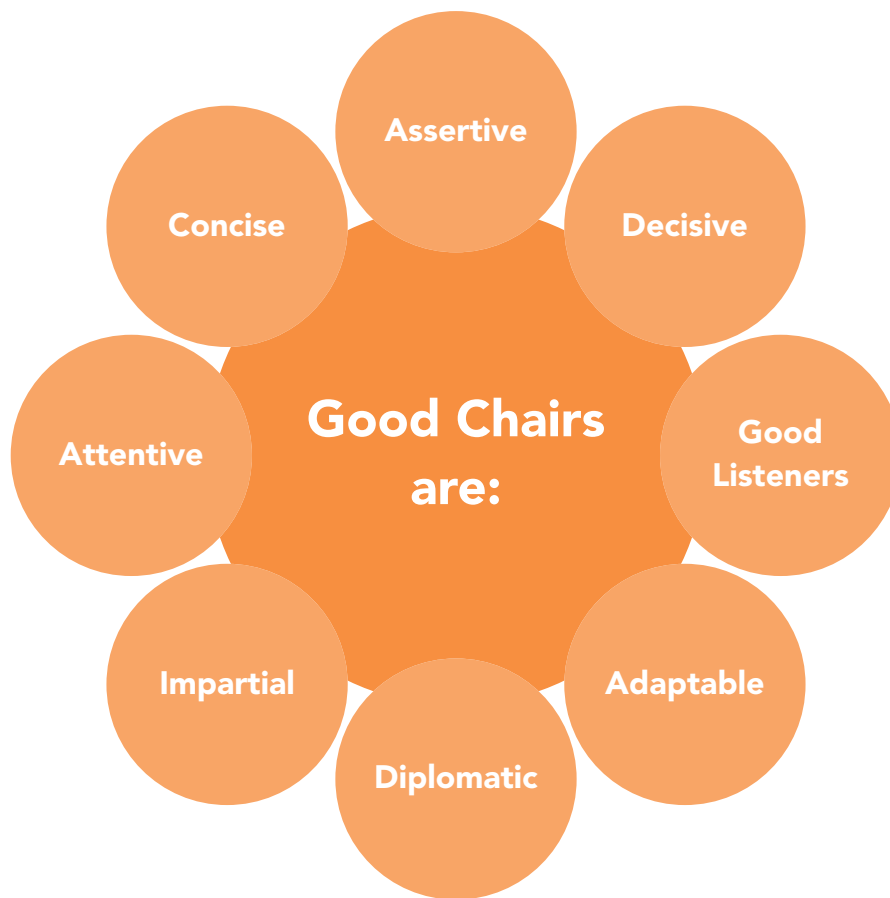
#### **Key Points**

- The Chair carries the ultimate responsibility for the success of the meeting.
- The Chair is responsible for making sure that all business is discussed in line with the timed agenda, everyone's views are heard and clear decisions are reached.

# 1 WHAT MAKES A GOOD CHAIR?

It is important that the Chair has the respect of the other participants in the meeting, as they will need to defer to the Chair even on occasions where they have strong views about the matters under discussion.

The role of the Chair can be very demanding, especially where a meeting is dealing with contentious issues, and will test your communication skills to the full.



A good Chair needs to demonstrate a broad spectrum of skills, including: diplomacy, attentiveness, decisiveness, adaptability, assertiveness, and impartiality.

## 1.1 ACTIVE LISTENING

One of the most important skills you will require to become a good Chair is that of ‘active listening.’ Active listening involves concentrating one hundred percent on the attendee who is speaking and remaining attentive to what is being said, no matter what distractions may be present. You must focus all your energy on the content of the message, taking into account subtle signs given off by the speaker through their tone and body language.

It is vital you shut your mind to formulating your own response or acknowledging your own emotions whilst the conversation is underway. You will be better able to absorb the full meaning of the communication by listening to it in its entirety and only then preparing your response. This enables you to demonstrate your ability to be concise and persuasive to others in the meeting.

A simple technique to keep you focused on the conversation and show that you are listening to what is being said is to use your facial and head movements. For example a nod of the head, eye and eyebrow movement, a smile of acknowledgment – whatever is most appropriate. You can also verbalize that you are concentrating on what is being said by uttering an ‘OK,’ ‘Uh huh’ or something similar.

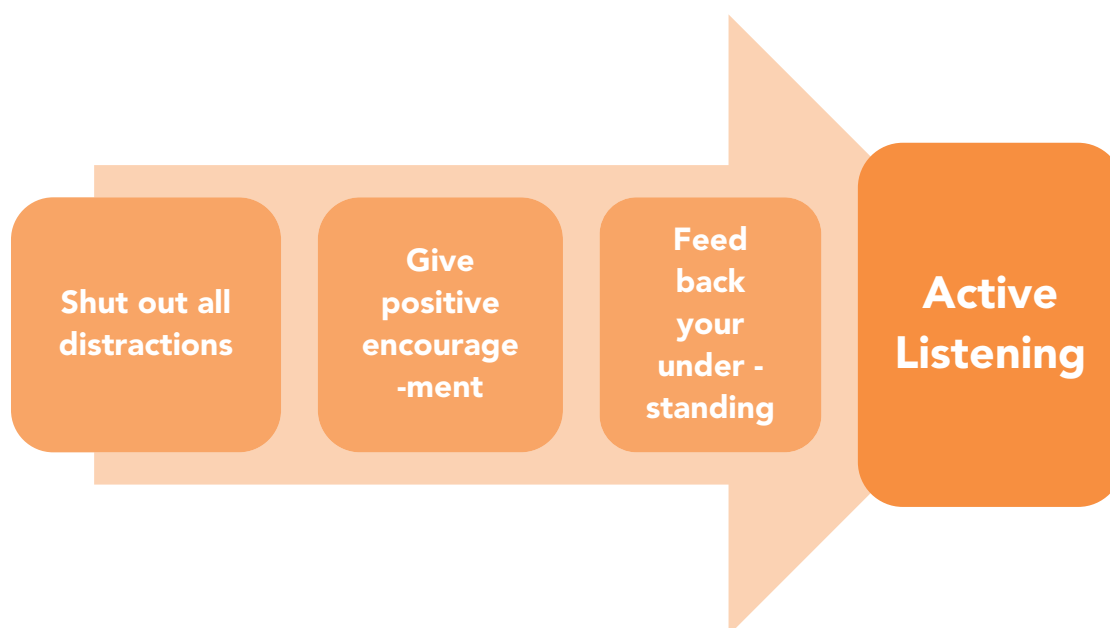
The reason that active listening is so important is because the behavior of the Chair has such a big influence on the behavior of the other attendees. If the Chair remains fully engaged with the speaker, then most of the other participants will do likewise and listen carefully rather than becoming distracted. Active listening also makes the speaker feel that their contribution is valued. This can be a decisive factor in making the meeting a positive experience for some of the less confident attendees.

In your role as Chair it is your ability to accurately paraphrase what you have just heard into a coherent statement that most actively informs the speaker and the other participants that you have heard what they have actually said. It will also demonstrate that you have been impartial and decisive in your statement. Typically you could say something along the lines of

‘So the key issue we need to address is...do you agree?’

‘Can I summarize by saying that the best way forward is...is everyone happy with that?’

‘From all that has been said so far the main obstacle is...?’



You will also be able to better control interruptions and diversions within the meeting by utilizing this technique to draw an agenda item to a timely close. It is a structured and positive way to be assertive and retain control of the meeting.

## 1.2 ASSERTIVENESS AND DIPLOMACY

You will need to be able to maintain control to ensure that progress is made in line with the schedule – as defined in the agenda. The Chair should always aim to strike a balance between hearing everyone's views and getting through the business. Ensuring that everyone gets a hearing will almost certainly involve stopping someone from dominating the proceedings and active listening will help this to happen.

The more contentious the issue the more likely it is that you will have to be both assertive and diplomatic to ensure everyone has the opportunity to contribute. You don't need to be rude or dogmatic. Phrases such as 'I think we should hear from Ms. Smith on this' or 'Can we have some comments from the engineering department on this' should be sufficient in most cases.

By making sure that each speaker is able to make their contribution without being interrupted, you will encourage others to listen to what is being said and to consider it carefully before making their own point.

Before chairing a meeting you must assess the relative importance of each agenda item and adhere to the suggested timings. If you feel these should be changed then inform the meeting at the start along with your reasoning.

The important thing is to not find the meeting being derailed as discussions focus on a particular item without reaching a resolution. As Chair it is imperative that you control such discussions before they get out of hand. You need to remind participants of the meeting objective and be decisive in drawing the item to a close.

You may want to have it minuted that you recommend this issue is discussed further at a separate meeting. You could also summarize the discussion so far on a flip chart or electronic white board and say you'll come back to it if there is sufficient time. The downside of this type of resolution is that many participants will feel that the item is unresolved and keep on referring back to it.



Discover the truth at [www.deloitte.ca/careers](http://www.deloitte.ca/careers)

**Deloitte.**

© Deloitte & Touche LLP and affiliated entities.

### 1.3 IMPARTIALITY

Another key attribute for a Chair is their ability to demonstrate that they take an impartial standpoint, seeking out the facts and judging each argument equally and fairly. It is important that you do not routinely use your position as Chair to favor views that support what you may privately consider the best course of action. If you wish to have a motion tabled at a meeting that you are chairing, try enlisting another participant to actually make that point.

In extreme circumstances, you may decide that it is necessary to sacrifice impartiality for what you see as the importance of helping the group decide on a certain course of action. But remember, the main concern of the Chair should be the aims and objectives of the group and the integrity of the meeting process.

Your ongoing effectiveness as Chair will nearly always be more important than your ability to shape the outcome of any single issue. If you become embroiled in a debate you risk losing your credibility and once lost this can prove impossible to regain.

### 1.4 ADAPTABILITY

Your ability to relate to and work with a broad cross-section of personalities will be a significant advantage, as you will easily adapt your behavior to draw comments from the diverse group of participants. Add this skill to the one of active listening and you will be able to ensure that everyone, regardless of status, will feel confident to contribute in the meeting.

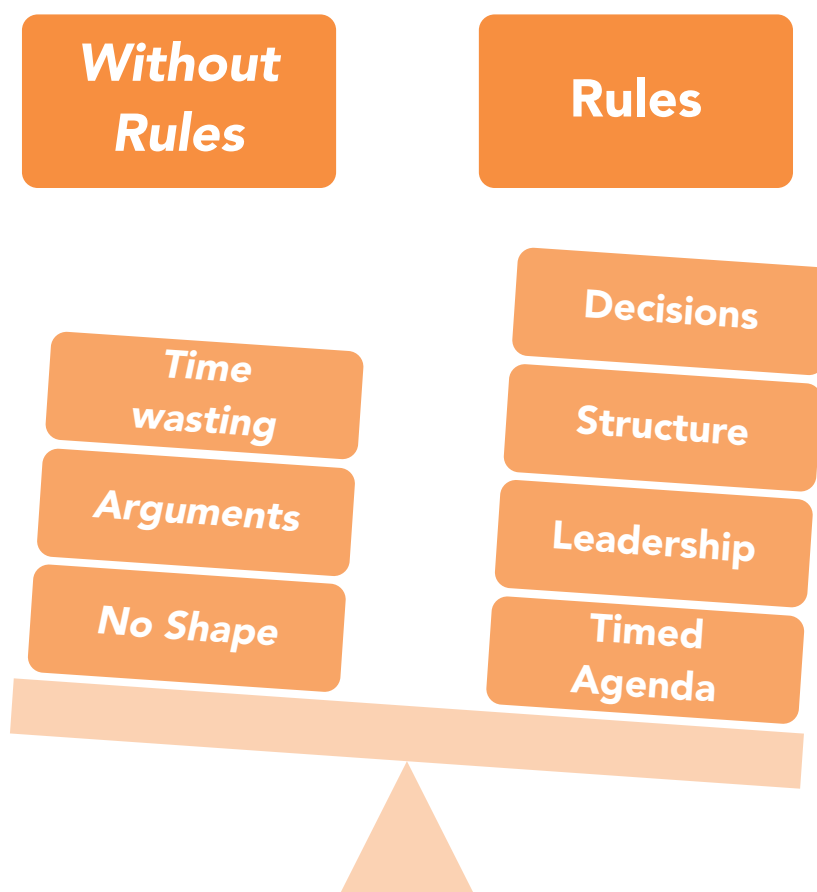
#### Key Points

- A good Chair 'actively listens' to the discussions taking place and demonstrates his or her understanding by feeding back what he or she has heard and then making a statement to draw an argument to a conclusion.
- It is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that all the business is discussed in line with the agenda timings.
- Ensure that everyone's views are heard and discussed and that clear decisions are reached and accepted.
- A successful Chair needs to be assertive and impartial in order to keep the meeting on track without alienating any of the participants.
- Clearly summarize proceedings with an emphasis on decisions taken and future plans, ensuring that the meeting objective is met.

## 2 MEETING RULES

Most organizations do not have a set of written rules and most meetings are run according to the prevailing ethos of the organization or individual department.

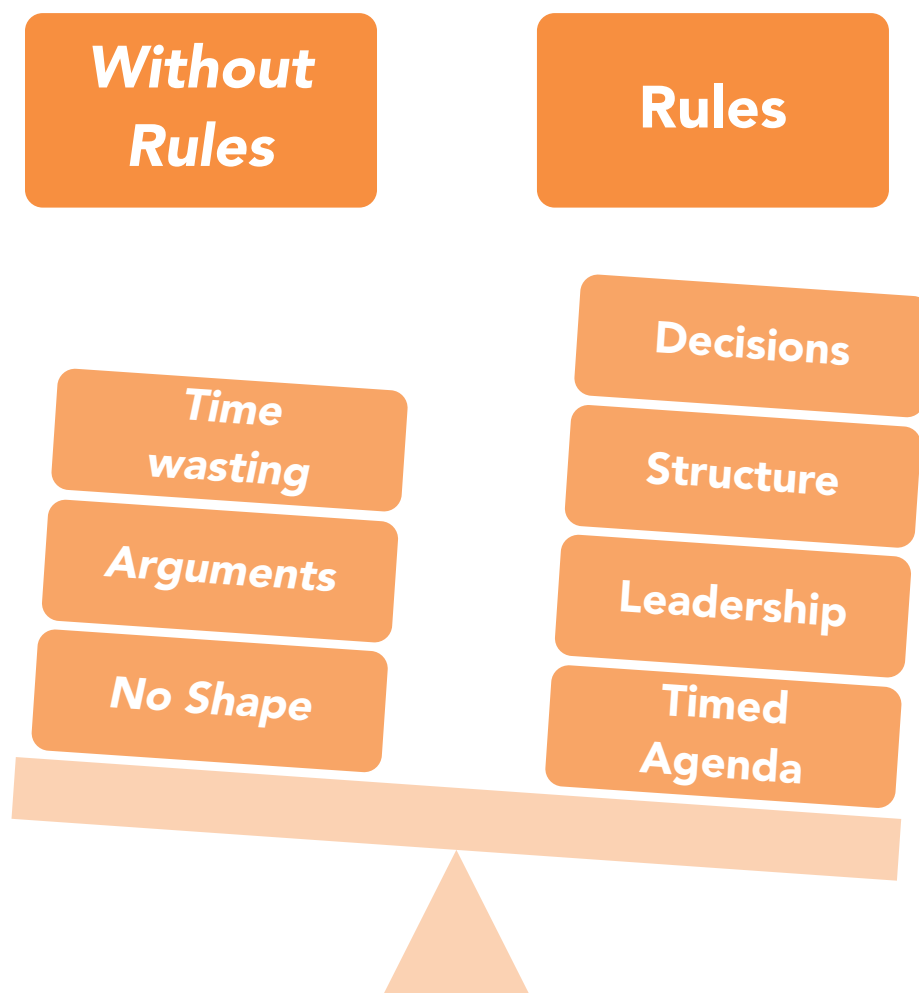
This often causes problems as the expectations of participants can vary widely especially when not everyone attending shares the same cultural values. For example, an attendee from the sales department may be used to meetings that are fairly argumentative, whereas someone from engineering may be used to a more reserved atmosphere.



Those from a more reserved culture can feel intimidated by those from a more assertive one. The former feel that the latter are behaving in an antagonistic way, even where this is completely unintentional. This is something that is becoming more common as organizations become less insular.



If this is typical of your organization you may wish to emulate the rules and behavior of a Chair you have experienced elsewhere. Many Chairs at conferences outline as part of their opening speech how they expect the audience to behave.



This is something you can emulate in your own meetings and communicate in any guidelines you give at the beginning of the meeting. You can also encourage these behaviors in your own team meetings and exhibit them yourself in any meeting you attend.

By taking a proactive approach to what constitutes acceptable behavior at your meetings, you can prevent bad feeling developing between participants and make your role of Chair more effective.

Example meeting rules include:

- Speak only through the Chair. Indicate that you want to speak and wait for the Chair to say it's your turn
- Never interrupt other people
- Give the speaker your full attention. No mobile devices visible or used during the meeting
- Stick to the item on the agenda
- Respect other people's views – don't use negative body language, for example shaking your head or rolling your eyes, etc.
- Always put your point of view calmly and politely
- Do not present opinions as facts
- Keep contributions short and to the point
- Don't use aggressive body language, for example pointing at other participants

You will need to remind people of the meeting rules at each meeting. There may be new people there, and even regular attendees will forget. The most effective way is to ensure that as Chair you assert your control over such disruptive behavior in a diplomatic and encouraging manner.

One of the most important functions of meeting rules is to prevent attendees from feeling marginalized by the behavior of others. The types of behavior that can lead to this feeling of marginalization include: sub-groups of attendees talking among themselves, addressing their contributions to each other rather than to the meeting as a whole, and attendees checking mobile devices rather than giving the speaker their full attention. Some people are very sensitive to these things and will withdraw from the meeting if they feel their contribution is not being properly valued.

As Chair it is your responsibility to encourage all attendees to actively participate and you need to watch out for participants who are exhibiting passive aggressive behavior through their non-contribution. You can easily identify this type of behavior, as these attendees will usually be sitting back in their seat, away from the table, arms crossed and possibly their head down, totally disengaging from what is going on around them.

The importance of dealing constructively with attendees who are exhibiting passive aggressive behavior cannot be overstated. Even though it may be tempting to ignore someone who is obviously in silent disagreement with the rest of the group, it is never worth it.

Any progress that is made by avoiding a dispute during the meeting will be lost many times over when the resulting action has to be implemented in the real world. If the person who is in disagreement feels as though they have had a fair hearing then they will be more inclined to work towards implementing a course of action, even though they may still disagree with it. If, however, they feel as though their opinion was never considered then they might do everything they can to obstruct it.

It is also worth pointing out that once someone feels marginalized in a meeting then it is rare for this feeling to go away by itself. In fact, they often mentally withdraw from the whole process and convince themselves that they don't share any responsibility for the decisions that are reached. Obviously, this lack of buy-in to future actions can be catastrophic if the person in question has a key role in the implementation of those actions.

#### **Key Points**

- An agreed set of meeting rules can prevent bad feeling from developing between attendees who have different norms of behavior.
- Rules bring structure to the meeting and focus attendees to achieving the meeting objective.
- Rules ensure that all participants' time is productive.
- Rules reduce the risk of participants feeling marginalized and opting out of the meeting process.

## 3 THE DUTIES OF THE CHAIR

As Chair, you need to be aware that your duties are not solely confined to that of the meeting itself.

### 3.1 BEFORE THE MEETING

When asked to perform the role of Chair you need to be conscious of the tasks you must perform before the meeting. You may choose to delegate some of them – for example, circulating the agenda and coordinating attendee acceptances.



As Chair, you need to be sure that a meeting is the best way to achieve the objective and that you have asked the ‘right’ people to attend. You need to acquire sufficient knowledge of the issues you have been asked to address through the meeting objective so that your request for attendees will be seriously considered.

When drawing up a list of people to invite you need to be certain that they have the right skills, knowledge, and authority to make the decisions required. Your invite to them needs to communicate the meeting objective clearly and outline the importance of their own contribution, expertise, and participation, so that they see the meeting as worth attending.

You are not pre-empting the meeting outcome with this activity; your objective is to gain everyone’s ‘buy-in’ to the meeting. This may involve you in some personal networking with key individuals to properly apprise them of the situation and its importance.

As a manager it will usually be appropriate for you to delegate to a member of your team the co-ordination of attendees’ replies. This person will collate the final list of attendees, which will be supplied to the minute taker prior to the meeting.

A key factor that can influence people’s attendance at a meeting is its time and location. This issue will largely be dictated by circumstances, as you may not have the freedom to select the ideal date and location of the meeting. In the case of tight deadlines these factors are decided on practical terms rather than those that would ensure the most attendees.

If you find yourself in the situation where a critical number of key individuals are unable to attend the meeting do not be afraid to postpone or cancel it. Trying to proceed without the right people is usually a waste of time.

Creating an agenda follows a simple three-stage process.



Firstly, use your knowledge of the situation to list the key issues requiring discussion and resolution. Then for each item give it a weighting in terms of its significance to achieving the objective, and allocate a period of time you think is necessary to discuss it. Finally, put these items into your meeting timeframe using the weighting as a means of prioritizing items. Your resulting agenda will cover all the key items with sufficient time to discuss each one.

Your final action before the meeting is to allocate someone to take the minutes. They should have sufficient knowledge of the subject under discussion that they are able to take accurate notes, as well as recognize key facts and decisions. If this person also has a contribution to make at the meeting, then you need to agree with them in advance who is qualified to take notes on their behalf whilst they contribute to the meeting.

Whoever you choose to take the minutes at your meeting must be aware of what is required. You may want to ensure that several of your team members are competent in this area so that they can be called on to perform this role. Many managers use a simple rotation of who takes the minutes at their own team meetings.

The tasks listed here represent what is usually expected of a Chair, but you should assess your own requirements and act accordingly.

#### **Key Points**

- Define the meeting objective and decide if this is the best way to address the issues.
- Ensure the key contributors and those with authority to make decisions are invited to attend. If too few are available postpone or cancel the meeting.
- Select the most appropriate time and place for the meeting.
- Set a well thought out and timely agenda.
- Assign a competent individual to take the minutes.

### 3.2 AT THE START OF THE MEETING

There are several things that you can do at the beginning of the meeting to get it off to the best possible start.



Arriving fifteen minutes or so before the start of your meeting enables you to perform these tasks comfortably and gives you sufficient time for a final run through of proceedings with your minute taker.

Firstly, look for any problems with the seating, lighting, heating, or technology that may have an impact on the meeting if left unchanged.

Secondly, ensure that each place setting has a copy of the final agenda, as not everyone will remember to bring the latest copy with them. There may also be other papers to hand out, but in order to avoid people reading through these papers when they should be paying attention to the discussion, agree how and when such papers are handed out to attendees. You may want to allocate a short comfort break before a paper is discussed, so that everyone has the opportunity to remind themselves of its contents.


Finally, make sure that you start the meeting on time. In this way you quickly establish your control of the meeting by your behavior and tone. As the meeting progresses you may choose to be more informal but it is paramount that you begin formally and professionally.

After your friendly and courteous welcome thanking everyone for coming, you should state the objectives and timescales of the meeting. A quick review of the agenda allows participants an opportunity to understand all proposed major items. You do not want any distractions to occur through participants suggesting alterations or additions to the agenda at this stage, because this will take up valuable discussion time and reduce the likelihood of your meeting objective being attained.


However, if a key contributor informs you that they are delayed you may wish to delay proceedings till they arrive to avoid going over the same ground twice, or you may elect to alter the order of the agenda to prevent delays. Your response to this will be dependent on who is delayed and whether or not an alteration to the agenda will compromise the meeting objective.

SIMPLY CLEVER

ŠKODA



**We will turn your CV into an opportunity of a lifetime**



Do you like cars? Would you like to be a part of a successful brand? We will appreciate and reward both your enthusiasm and talent. Send us your CV. You will be surprised where it can take you.

Send us your CV on  
[www.employerforlife.com](http://www.employerforlife.com)





Once you have declared the meeting open, introduce yourself and the other participants as appropriate to the nature of the meeting. It is especially important to get the names and job titles of the participants correct. Then make any apologies for absence, on behalf of non-attendees. In certain circumstances it may be helpful to get people to say something about themselves as part of the introductions, but ensure you've allocated time for this otherwise you'll be behind schedule before any discussion has even started.

#### Key Points

- Arrive early enough to sort out any practical problems at the meeting venue.
- Bring extra copies of the agenda and necessary papers so that everyone has sight of these during the meeting.
- Start formally and on time, as this will set the tone for the rest of the meeting.
- Introduce the participants and make everyone feel welcome, if appropriate.
- State clearly what it is that the meeting seeks to achieve and use this to focus the group.
- State how long the meeting will last and if it is a lengthy one state the times of any breaks.

### 3.3 DURING THE MEETING

Your role is to achieve a balance between encouraging valid contributions to achieve the meeting goal, and at the same time preventing disruptive asides and interruptions.



Controlling the meeting is your key function as Chair – without control you will not be able to achieve the meeting objective. Your actions, attitudes, and body language will be major influencing factors in how well you maintain control, and should illustrate that you will not tolerate private discussions taking place during the meeting.

Using the timings of the agenda is one of your main methods of maintaining that control. Ensure you can see a watch or clock at all times. The allotted slot for each agenda item gives you the authority to draw discussion to a close and decide on any actions required.

You will use the agenda to control the start of each discussion and ensure it begins at its allotted time slot. You should ensure everyone present has a common understanding of the topic or expected outcome by offering a brief overview. You can then invite others to make constructive and focused contributions that will keep diversions to a minimum.

On occasions where you find the discussion is becoming too lengthy, you should interject; summarize it, and bring it back on track. The more focused you are able to keep discussions, the greater others will be encouraged to contribute as they feel their input is valued. Your ability to summarize discussions will be a major benefit in gaining acceptance of timed actions and assigning someone responsible for their delivery.

Always be aware that some people may be hesitant in commenting because they are shy or withdrawn. Look out for body language signs, such as a subtle shake of the head or a furrowed brow, that indicate a difference of opinion, and ask for that person's view of the issue.

Your ability to anticipate and defuse such situations can be greatly enhanced with preparation. Knowing in advance the preferences and stances of the participants, and how different groups relate, will be of great assistance. It is often questions or suggestions from unexpected quarters that make others aware of a potential new approach to an issue.

By actively listening to all aspects of the discussion you will quickly perceive any changes in tone, from a constructive to a confrontational mood. Regain control of such situations by summarizing arguments and refocusing the participants onto the agenda item and the required outcome. You may want to move on to the next agenda item if you feel that would be the most beneficial course of action in order to retain control.

Keeping everyone's focus on the topic of discussion is imperative as this minimizes the number of interruptions and keeps proceedings within the set timeframe. By displaying a lack of tolerance of interruptions such as heckling or bullying tactics whilst someone is speaking you ensure that everyone is shown the same courtesy and that their contribution is valued. You should reaffirm that anyone wishing to contribute indicates their intention to the Chair, who at a convenient point will ask for their input.

You can also ask for some comments to be noted on a flip chart by the minute taker so that they can be discussed once the current speaker has presented their point of view or under another agenda item, whichever is most effective. Often important issues are raised during discussions and whilst it may not be appropriate to debate the issue in your meeting, its nature may be of sufficient importance that another meeting needs to be set up to address it. Your chosen method to deal with such distractions will depend on how it relates to the topic under discussion.

During any discussion if you think that a speaker is basing their contribution on opinion rather than fact then you should ask them to provide data to back up their argument.

For some large-scale meetings you will need to be aware of any legal procedures that can be invoked to control or direct the business of any meeting. In these circumstances it is imperative that you establish your authority and control from the outset of the meeting.

As you draw the meeting to a close ask the minute taker if they are happy with their record of the meeting's events and if all actions have been allocated to a person with a realistic timeframe for completion. You may want to ask the person taking the minutes to produce and distribute to attendees a 'Summary Action Sheet.'

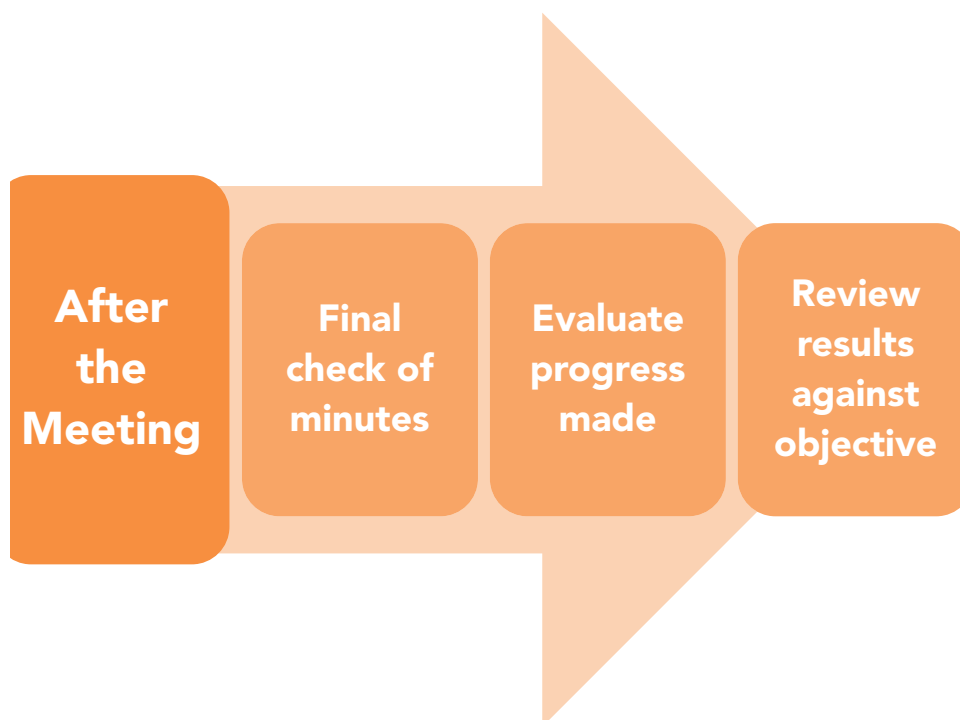
As Chair you then sum up each agenda item in terms of its significance to the overall discussion. If it is required, set the time, date, and location of the next meeting. Your aim is to always end the meeting on time, thereby showing respect for the participants. Finally, thank everyone for their valued contributions and emphasize the achievements made, ending the meeting in a positive and professional manner.

### Key Points

- Ensure you establish control from the outset.
- Keep the meeting focused and on time, and encourage participation and contributions from everyone.
- Agree and minute all the key points and actions with timeframe and accountability detailed.
- Ensure unresolved items or non-agenda items raised during the meeting are noted for later attention.
- Active listening will enable you to limit the number of interruptions and anticipate and diffuse deteriorating situations.
- Draw out contributions from those who have a point of view or question but may be reluctant to communicate it, or who may refrain from doing so.
- Sum up all of the items on the agenda, giving each one the time you feel represented its significance to the overall debate.

## 3.4 AFTER THE MEETING

Your final tasks involve checking and evaluating what was achieved and how well the meeting objective was met.



Before the meeting minutes are distributed, along with a Summary Action Sheet if applicable, you must ensure they are an accurate record of what took place and was agreed during the meeting. This is a key part of your role as Chair because the minutes will form the official record of events and in some cases a legal document.

It is always advisable to review the meeting process. Your method of review will depend on the nature of your meeting; sometimes a short email requesting feedback is adequate. This allows participants to offer suggestions for improvements for future meetings. This tends to work best with a small group that meets regularly, but can also be useful in other situations.

You should also conduct your own evaluation of how the meeting went and how well its objectives were met. Subjective feelings about the success or otherwise of a meeting can be misleading. Sometimes a meeting that went smoothly will turn out not to have achieved very much, whilst a meeting that felt acrimonious may have achieved most of its objectives.

You may also wish to discuss this type of event with your mentor or coach as part of your own personal development and reflect on how well the event was conducted. A key aspect of this process is to indicate aspects of the meeting you would handle differently now you have the benefit of hindsight.

#### **Key Points**

- Check the minutes prior to circulation.
- Review and evaluate the meeting process and your performance in the Chair role.
- Review and evaluate the meeting results against the objectives.

## 4 SUMMARY

As the Chair, your primary concern should be with the process of the meeting and not the substantive issues it has been called to address. Your role is one of an impartial facilitator, so you should not try to influence decisions made.

Your ongoing effectiveness as Chair will nearly always be more important than your ability to shape the outcome of any single issue. If you get embroiled in the debate concerning one or more issues, you risk losing your credibility and once lost this can prove impossible to regain.



If you wish to have a motion tabled at a meeting that you are chairing, try enlisting another participant to actually make that point. Offering tacit support to someone else's case is a more effective tactic than making it yourself.

If you wish to influence the outcome of a particular debate, an effective tactic might be to seek approval for processes that are likely to favor your preferred outcome. If successful, you will be able to exert influence without expressing an opinion. In extreme circumstances, you may decide that it is necessary to sacrifice impartiality for what you see as the importance of helping the group decide on a certain course of action, but this is not something that you should do without careful consideration.

The main concern of the Chair should be the aims and objectives of the group and the integrity of the meeting process. The personal qualities required by an effective Chair include: authority, flexibility, impartiality, and maturity.

## 5 REFERENCES

Harvard Business Review, (2014), *Running Meetings (20-Minute Manager Series)*, Harvard Business Review Press

Palmer, A. (2013), *Talk Lean: Shorter Meetings. Quicker Results. Better Relations*, Capstone

Baker, H. & Greenhall, M. (2010), *Writing Meeting Minutes and Agendas. Taking Notes of Meetings. Sample Minutes and Agendas, Ideas for Formats and Templates. Minute Taking Training Wit (Easy 4 Me 2 Learn)*, Universe of Learning Ltd

Gutmann, J. (3rd Ed) (2014), *Taking Minutes of Meetings (Creating Success)*, Kogan Page; 3 edition

Green, A. (2014) *In the Chair: How to Guide Groups and Manage Meetings*, Parthian Books

Axelrod, R. & E. (2014), *Let's Stop Meeting Like This: Tools to Save Time and Get More Done* (BK Business), Berrett-Koehler

Barker, A. (2nd Ed) (2011), *How to Manage Meetings (Creating Success)*, Kogan Page

Pickford, J. (ed.) (2003), *Master People Management*, Financial Times, Prentice Hill.

Allen, D. (2002), *Getting Things Done: How to Achieve Stress-free Productivity*, Piatkus

Morgenstern, J. (2ndEd) (2004), *Time Management*, Owl Books (NY)

Hasson, G. (2012), *Brilliant Communication Skills*, Pearson..